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William (Bill) J. Lyons Jr.
Secretary, California Department of Food and Agriculture

Governor Gray Davis named William (Bill) J. Lyons Jr. as Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture in January 1999. As secretary, he oversees policy and programs that support California's \$27 billion agricultural industry.

As a rancher and businessman, Secretary Lyons brings nearly three decades of leadership and business expertise to the department. Secretary Lyons has worked on agricultural, water and environmental issues, earning a positive reputation as a leader who can build consensus among diverse groups to achieve common ground.

In California's great Central Valley, the Lyons family has been actively involved in production agriculture for more than 75 years. Secretary Lyons managed the 6,000-acre family ranch located in the Modesto area from 1976 to 1999. The ranch produces a number of crop and livestock commodities.

From 1993 to 1999, Secretary Lyons served as chairman of the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency State Committee. As chairman he worked to oversee and enforce national procedures and policies for USDA farm programs in California through 32 county offices and 200 employees. Secretary Lyons was also appointed by the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors to serve from 1996 to 1998 as founding director of the East Stanislaus Resource Conservation District.

Throughout Secretary Lyons' distinguished career, he has held elected office on a number of boards and commissions, including the California Farm Bureau Federation Board of Directors, Modesto Irrigation District Board of Directors, Stanislaus County Farm Bureau Board of Directors, Stanislaus and Tuolumne County USDA Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation Service Committee, and the Stanislaus/San Joaquin Counties' Cattlemen's Association Board of Directors.

His works and accomplishments have won him top industry honors and awards. The United States Department of Agriculture has awarded Secretary Lyons three times; in 1998 with a certificate of appreciation, in 1997 with an award for excellence, and in 1996 with a national environmental award. In 1995, the California Farm Bureau Federation recognized him with a service award for his many contributions. In addition to industry awards too numerous to mention, Secretary Lyons has also contributed to community and nonprofit organizations. The United States Jaycees named him the Outstanding Young Man of America in 1984, and both the City of Modesto and Stanislaus County have awarded him with various service commendations.

His alma mater, the California State University at Chico, honored Secretary Lyons in April 2000 with a Distinguished Alumni Award. He graduated from the university with a bachelor's degree and secondary teaching credential. Secretary Lyons and his wife, Suzy, have been married for 24 years and have four children.